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AT THE
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY,

Held on the 7th of June, 1830;

SIR ALEXANDER JOHNSTON, Chairman of the Committee of Correspondence, having verbally reported the proceedings of that Committee since the Anniversary in 1829;

It was RESOLVED,

“That he be requested to reduce his report to writing, and that it be
“printed in the Appendix to the Society’s Transactions.”

THIRD REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE.
OF THE
Royal Asiatic Society.

THE object for which the Committee of Correspondence was established is, that it may become a medium through which persons in Asia may obtain from Europe, and persons in Europe may obtain from Asia, such information relative to the East as they cannot otherwise obtain with the same degree of facility; the nature of the proceedings of the Committee must, therefore, in a great degree, depend on the nature of the inquiries which are making in Asia and in Europe relative to India. In reporting its proceedings during the last year, we shall arrange them under four different heads:—Under the first, The inquiries relative to those languages which are called the Polynesian languages:—under the second, The inquiries relative to the history of the intercourse which has subsisted between Europe and Asia, from the earliest ages to the present period;—under the third, The inquiries relative to such of the institutions in India as most materially influence the moral and the political state of the natives of the country;—under the fourth, The inquiries relative to the history of the descendants of the different foreign nations, European as well as Asiatic, who have from time to time settled in different parts of India.

First, Baron WILLIAM HUMBOLDT, the great philosophical grammarian, whose letter to Sir ALEXANDER JOHNSTON, on the most useful method of inquiring into Oriental languages, has been published in the Transactions of the Society, is at present engaged in an investigation of the affinities between the different languages which prevail amongst the islanders inhabiting the islands that extend from the Pacific Ocean east, to Madagascar west; and with a view of ascertaining whether these different languages are all modifications of one language, is anxious to obtain from the island of Madagascar specimens of the several languages which are spoken by the different people who are settled upon that island, conceiving from the resemblance which appears between these languages and those which prevail in the other islands, that such specimens will enable him to come to a satisfactory conclusion upon the subject. Sir CHARLES COLVILLE, the Governor of the Mauritius, has therefore, at the request of the Committee of Correspondence, obtained for him a great many different specimens of the languages of Madagascar, printed at the Missionary Press in that island, with some very interesting observations by the Rev. Mr. FREEMAN, one of the Protestant missionaries on the island.

Secondly, Professor HEEREN, the Professor of Oriental History at Göttingen, who is so distinguished all over Europe for his researches into the history of the intercourse which subsisted in ancient times between Asia and Europe, being anxious to avail himself of the influence of the Royal Asiatic Society, in prosecuting his inquiries, has sent the Committee instructions for their guidance in collecting information upon the subject, and they will direct their researches into the history of the people settled in ancient times along the coasts of Egypt and Syria, along those of the Red Sea from Suez to Bab-el-Mandel, along those of Abyssinia, along those of the Persian Gulf from Bussorah to Bushire, along those of Coromandel and Malabar, along the banks of the Ganges and Brāhmaputra, and particularly along the north-west coast of Ceylon, and the south-east coast of the peninsula of India, which are close to the two passages called the Paumbum and Manār pass, and which are contiguous to the pearl fisheries so celebrated of old as the great emporiums of trade between the eastern and western divisions of the world. The Committee expect to derive information upon this part of history from the manuscripts and other ancient documents in the libraries at Cordova, Seville, Genoa, Venice, and Constantinople, and from the Asiatic Committees established at St. Petersburg and Odessa.

Thirdly, Amongst other institutions in India, the Committee have directed their attention particularly to those of property and marriage, conceiving that they are the two institutions which in India, as in every other part of the world, are those which have the greatest influence upon the moral and the political state of the inhabitants of the country, whose freedom and prosperity must depend in a great measure upon the wisdom of the laws and customs by which these two institutions are regulated and protected amongst them. In investigating the state of property in India, the Committee have considered it under two heads:—1st, As it relates to property in slaves. 2dly, As it relates to property in land. Upon the first they have derived much valuable

information from Mr. BABER. Upon the second they have referred with great advantage to the work recently published by Colonel BRIGGS. In considering the institution of marriage, the Committee hope to have the assistance of the same gentleman, and to be able to procure a clear and well arranged statement of that institution, as it prevails under various modifications, in different parts of India.

Fourthly, The descendants of the different foreign nations who have from time to time settled in India, are the Jews at Cochin, on the Malabar coast; the Afghans in the northern part of India; the Parsís at Surat and Bombay; the Muhammadans in the north and the interior of India, and those on the coasts of Malabar, Coromandel, and Ceylon,—the former descended from the Moguls, the latter from the Arabs, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, the Danes, and the English. With respect to the history of the Jews at Cochin, the Committee will have the benefit of the advice of Professor MILMAN, the author of the History of the Jews; he will draw up instructions to guide the Committee in their researches, and to enable them to procure such information as may be wanted to complete that portion of the Jewish history which relates to those Jews who from the earliest times have established themselves in different portions of Asia. Lord PRUDHOE has numerous specimens of the ancient characters which are found upon Mount Sinai, and in the country through which the Jews performed their pilgrimage, and his Lordship will give the Committee copies of these specimens, for the purpose of enabling them to ascertain if the Jews at Cochin, or if any other people in India, are acquainted with the characters and can decipher them. With respect to the Afghans, the Committee will endeavour to learn, from Mr. ELPHINSTONE and from the translations which are about to be made of the history of that people, whether there be any real foundation for the opinions which have been circulated, that they are descended from the Jews, and that they are connected with the several bodies of Jews who are dispersed throughout India. With respect to the Parsís, the Committee will refer, through Sir CHARLES FORBES, who is so highly esteemed by them, to the distinguished Parsís who are established at Surat and Bombay. With respect to the different classes of Muhammadans, as well those who are established in the interior as those who are established on the coasts of India, the Committee will collect information from the different manuscripts in Arabic and Persian, which are found in India, Persia, Turkey, Russia, and England, and from those early works of the Portuguese which treat in a detailed manner of the establishment and commerce in India of the Muhammadans, who were the great rivals of that nation in trade and in arms when they first made their settlement in India, and on the coasts of Ceylon. With respect to the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, the Danes, and the English, the Committee will find ample sources of information amongst the valuable records which are preserved in the archives of those nations, both in India and in Europe, and in the proceedings at Rome, in Spain, and in Portugal, of the different Catholic missions which have establishments in India. Such information will enable the public to judge of the effects of the different systems of policy which have been observed by each of the foreign nations established in India; many of which have encouraged the colonization of their descendants in India, and have endeavoured, upon

principles of policy, to impress upon the minds of the natives of the country an idea of respect and veneration for those descendants, and their religious and moral institutions.

The Committee having opened a communication with the inhabitants of the Mauritius, with the Parsis at Bombay, and with the descendants of Europeans in India, known by the appellation of East-Indians, expect to acquire from them much insight into the local history of the several countries in which they reside.

The inhabitants of the Mauritius have always been distinguished for their attention to science and to natural history. The establishment of a college on that island affords them a great facility in promoting the education and enlarging the understanding of their children. Their recent formation of a society for investigating the natural history of their own and of the adjacent islands, is an additional proof of their desire to collect and communicate to their countrymen every description of useful knowledge. The conduct of Mr. TELFAIR and Monsieur DABADIE, the former in his botanical and agricultural, the latter in his astronomical researches, deserves the highest approbation from the Royal Asiatic Society, which is already indebted to the Mauritius for some observations connected with astronomy, meteorology, and the variations of the magnetic needle.

The Parsis of Bombay entertain the most liberal feelings in favour of science and literature: they possess great wealth, and commercial relations with every part of Asia. The mission sent by them some years ago to Persia at their own expense, of KAUS, the father of MULLA FIRUS the editor of the *Desatir*, for the purpose of making inquiries relative to the remnant of the Parsis in that country; the discovery by KAUS while on that mission of a copy of the *Desatir* in the Pehlivi language, and the English translation of that curious work, published by MULLA FIRUS at Bombay in 1818, shew the spirit and the perseverance with which the Parsis of Bombay have instituted inquiries connected with the history of their country. The talents and the acquirements of the late Parsi naval architect, BOMANJI JAMSETJI, shew their capacity for acquiring and applying to important purposes, the most useful and the most difficult branches of mathematical and mechanical sciences, and the benevolence, the zeal, and the prudence with which his nephew BOMANJI HORMAJI is at present engaged in urging every measure by which the education, as well as the moral and the political improvement of his countrymen can be assisted, shew the correct views which they entertain of the principles of a free government, and the high value which they attach to the acquisition of the English language, to an efficient system of education, to the cultivation of their understanding, and to the unrestricted circulation throughout British India of European science and European literature.

The East-Indians who are established in different parts of India, are, from their descent, from their education, from their acquaintance with the English and the local languages, and from their associating with the natives, well adapted, provided proper encouragement be given them, to procure the most accurate and detailed reports on the situation of the country; and on the religion, manners, and usages of the people. Mr. GEORGE HUGHES, who is so distinguished for his talents and his

local knowledge in the peninsula of India; the late Mr. WHEATLEY, who held an office under the collector of Madura, and all the young East-Indians who were employed by the late Colonel M'KENZIE in surveying the country, and in inquiring into the history and the antiquities of the people, afford decisive evidence of the importance to science and literature of employing gentlemen of this class in making the researches to which the Royal Asiatic Society has directed its attention. Mr. RICKETTS, who is now in England for the purpose of submitting to Parliament such information as it may require relative to the present situation of his countrymen, has, with great credit to himself, promised to use his influence with them in securing their co-operation for the Society. The ability and manly character which this gentleman has evinced since his arrival in England, and the zeal with which he has entered into the views of the Society, lead the Committee to anticipate with confidence that the Society will derive the greatest benefit from his co-operation, and that of his countrymen in every part of the continent of India. The Committee likewise expect to receive much assistance from the descendants of Europeans on the Island of Ceylon, who, as well under the Dutch as under the English government, have been employed in the most respectable and confidential situations, and who have always shewn, in the discharge of their respective duties, not only great talents, but a high sense of honour, and an earnest desire to aid in every research which is connected with the history of that island.*

The Committee trust that the report which has just been made of their proceedings during the year, will shew that this Society is so constructed as to be enabled to obtain through its different members, for the British government and the British public, such local information upon many points now under public consideration, as can only be acquired by a long residence in India, and by an attentive observation of the country and of its inhabitants.

NOTE.

* Sir ALEXANDER JOHNSTON when president of His Majesty's Council in Ceylon, conceiving that his Majesty's Ministers could not efficiently adapt the system of the British government to the situation of the natives of the country without a thorough knowledge of their history, their religion, their manners, their customs, and even their prejudices, collected, with the assistance of many of these gentlemen, and that of the late RAJAH PAXA, who was the native chief of the Cinnamon department, and the best Sanscrit, Pali, and Cingalese scholar in Ceylon, and caused to be translated into English, for the information of the British Government, the three most ancient histories of the Island of Ceylon, called the *Mahāvamsi* the *Rājavali*, and the *Rājaratnācari*. The local histories of the Provinces of Trincomalee, the Wannic, Jaffna, Mantotte, and Coudramallee, the *Hippiros* of the Greeks, on Ceylon; the history of the island and of the pagoda of *Rāmiseram*; the histories of the four provinces of Ramnad, Madura, Trichinopoly, and Tanjore, which formed a part of the *Regio Pandionis* of PROLEMY, on the southern peninsula of India, and various other works connected with the local histories of the principal *Hindū* and *Buddhist* temples on Ceylon.